

I submit below selected testimony on behalf of the following individuals who kindly sent me comments on this docket. Portions of the following were given at the 2007 Chicago FCC Media Ownership Hearing, held at Rainbow PUSH on September 20, 2007. To ensure that the full comments are added to the record, I submit the following below.

Testimony from Salim Muwakkil

In the 90's two young boys were arrested for the murder of a young girl named Ryan Harris. The two pre-pubescent boys were accused of murdering and sexually assaulting this young girl. It seemed absurd to me that two pre-teens were charged with rape, especially when semen traces were left on the young girl's body.

Nevertheless, the mainstream media found no problem with the arrest. In fact, much of their coverage focused on the incredibly wanton nature of the act. It fit perfectly with the reigning conventional wisdom that America's inner cities were producing a unique generation of super predators who lacked scruples, morals or any redeeming characteristic whatsoever. There was little disbelief in the mainstream that two preteen black boys could commit such an outrage.

However, the black press refused to believe it. The Chicago Defender was openly skeptical of the charges. Radio station WVON, the only black-owned radio station in this market of more than one million African-Americans, was incredulous that such charges could be leveled against these two young boys. The station produced program after program featuring top-level legal minds and community activists who argued convincingly that the police were premature in fingering these two youngsters. After a time, those arguments convinced investigators to dig deeper and eventually police dropped the charges against these boys. They later apprehended a suspect whose DNA matched the sperm residue left on Ryan Harris's body.

Without the black media's insistent prompting, justice may have been done anyway. But there is little doubt that the radio station raised questions that would not have been heard without the amplification of black talk radio. That same situation applies to the criminal justice system, in general. We live in a nation that contains 25 per cent of the world's inmates. If 50 percent of those inmates are African-American males, then fully eight percent of the world's prisoners are African-American men.

Is this a state of nature? With mainstream media as our sole source, most Americans don't even think twice about this amazing disparity in our criminal justice system. A good contemporary example is the situation in Jena, Louisiana where six, teen boys were clear victims of a racially biased prosecution. Most white Americans are a bit perplexed by the intense interest this case has generated. To them, it seems a clear case of a mob beating – where six black boys were punished for beating one white boy. What they lack is a sense of context for the beating. Without an understanding of our historical

context the white supremacist biases of our culture disappear beneath a veil of denial. On crucial issues of racial bias, the black media has led the way to help all Americans come to grips with this cultural blind spot. It is essential therefore, that black media remain viable because we can not fulfill America's egalitarian promise until this blind spot is illuminated and redressed.

d. Easing restrictions on media consolidation dramatically reduces opportunities to fulfill that noble promise.

Testimony from Gail Schoenbacher

I am pleased to be a participant in this experience

To me this is an issue of freedom of speech as well as freedom of the press. It is only logical that the more people whose voices are heard, the more democratic the message will be. If only a handful; of for profit corporations*, whose greatest interest is making more money, have the most opportunities to speak, to tell us how to live, what we want and portray images of us that are violent and negative, it cannot be beneficial for the future of the United States.

I know many people tonight felt their minority was not represented. I, as a member of the female, white majority, also do not feel represented by the direction the media is moving. I have turned off my TV because it does not represent me. The messages do not speak to me. They simply repeat, be afraid and buy, buy, buy.

I have attended events, which were never covered by the media, or worse, they were misrepresented. I have learned more about events from friends in foreign countries than from our own media. I might find a blurb about this event on page ninety-four. Will these hearings be front-page news? They should be!

Please preserve and expand diversity and freedom of speech necessary for a healthy future of our country.

*According to the law, corporations are persons with the rights of a person but a corporation cannot be convicted of wrongdoing by the law. Only members of the corporation can.

Testimony from Shawn Campbell

For the past eight years, I was program director of 88.7 WLW, Chicago's listener supported community radio station. When I arrived at the station in 1999, we had around six or eight thousand listeners. Over time, that number increased to more than thirty thousand. Our volunteer staff grew from 35 to over 200. And when I talked to listeners, what I heard over and over was, "I don't know

what I'd do without you," "You guys are what radio is supposed to be," and, most frequently, "I'd given up on radio until I found WLW. You've restored my faith in radio."

WLW did this by being extremely local, with a real commitment to local music and local issues. We gave our listeners credit for being curious and open-minded. We acknowledged that people don't like just one kind of music. And we knew that there was a huge number of people out there who felt their voices weren't being heard on the radio dial.

We gave those people voices with our shows in seven different languages. With our coverage of issues that weren't be covered anywhere else – with programs focusing on topics like labor issues or social justice and activism from a faith-based perspective, and with national shows like Democracy Now. And we did it with our music, showcasing artists who were independent, adventurous, and often, local. We believed in live performances on the air, and in guests visiting us and telling us in their own words about what they were doing in their communities.

But it's likely that all this programming is coming to an end, because the station's owner, Loyola University, has announced its intentions to make the station a part of its new school of communication. Loyola appears not to understand that the broadcast doesn't end at the campus' edge. The great community programming we worked so hard to produce is likely to disappear because of an unsympathetic owner.

So I know first hand that ownership is the be-all and end-all of broadcasting. I know from this experience, and I know because, prior to WLW, I worked in commercial broadcasting, at ten different stations. I started my professional career in 1993, three years before the telecom act became law. Of those ten stations I worked at over the past decade and a half, nine have changed owners in that time. Five no longer even exist as unique stations, simply retransmitting another station's programming, or in one case, gone altogether. All that local, unique programming, gone.

And that's why I want to implore you today, not only to NOT allow any further consolidation of radio ownership, or newspaper/broadcast cross ownership -- which has done nothing but hurt local broadcaster professionals, who have to do more with fewer resources, AND local audiences, who get more commercials, more lowest-common-denominator programming, and less local coverage -- but to prioritize ensuring that the airwaves are MORE diverse, and that there are MORE owners.

One way you can do this is by allowing more low power FM radio stations across the country, not just in rural areas, but in big cities like Chicago. When we got the news about WLW, I formed CHIRP, the Chicago Independent Radio Project. My hope was to apply for a new LPFM license for a station where we could continue to do the work we began at WLW.

But I discovered very quickly that barriers stood in the way. Not only did I find that we would have to get Congress to pass the Local Community Radio Act before LPFMs would be allowed into cities, I found that, even if that measure did pass, Chicago, like NYC and LA STILL would be shut out. We found that it was you, commissioners, who would be the most important piece of this puzzle for us.

During the very time station applicants were being told there wasn't space on the dial for them, thousands of new translator signals were licensed, many in this very market. Translators use the exact same transmitters and broadcast equipment as LPFM stations. But translators do nothing for a local community. They provide no local coverage. The translators in Chicago are not here for their intended purpose – to fill in holes in a local station's coverage area – they are here because big companies used them to build national networks. Those stations do nothing for Chicago. But they are here, and CHIRP is told there is no place for us, despite our commitment to broadcast in the public interest in its truest sense.

I ask you today, commissioners, not only to refuse to allow large corporate owners any additional leeway in the already too generous broadcast ownership rules, but to commit to expanding localism and diversity by expanding LPFM to big cities with a rule change that would prioritize new LPFM applicants over translators, future AND existing, that provide no local programming.

You have the power to make a real difference here. Is it the large corporations who need more of a voice? NO! The airwaves belong to the people! Please do NOT allow further consolidation of media ownership, and DO make room for new LPFM stations in cities like Chicago by giving new local applicants priority over distant translators.

Thank you.

Testimony from Mitchell Szczepanczyk

Witam serdecznie. Welcome.

My name is Mitchell Szczepanczyk; I work as a software developer in Chicago, and today I made my national TV debut. I was a contestant on today's episode of the syndicated version of Who Wants To Be A Millionaire.

I've played trivia games my whole life, but I have spent the last five years on media politics, mostly with the group Chicago Media Action. And one key issue I've taken up is publicizing the FCC's proposed media ownership rule changes and the harm that's bound to result.

From personal experience, I can say that media concentration has been horrible for trying to raise the

issue of media concentration. Press conference and press releases I've helped create on the issue often go ignored because, with such concentrated media, Chicago working journalists often don't want to risk their jobs raising the issue.

And yet I found the issue holds great popular zeal. Almost everyone I've talked to wants decreased concentration, and those who call for the opposite are almost exclusively those who stand to profit from increased concentration.

But how do you tell people about media policies without using the media who have a vested interest in the matter? My own solution has been to spread the word in as many venues as I can. I have a weekly show on WHPK radio here on the south side. I help produce the monthly TV series of Chicago Indymedia locally on CAN TV. I write widely and contribute to assorted websites and blogs.

Yet I've probably been seen and heard by more people on my Millionaire appearance today than I have in five combined years of community media work. But I stand proud of my media work, since I've had far more freedom to voice concerns important to me than I ever could under a corporate regime.

But more relief is in order. At minimum, I urge the FCC to maintain its current media ownership rules. If it does change the rules, it should be towards reducing concentration. I also urge the FCC to authorize the creation of more community media outlets, and to create a panel to increase women and minority ownership in media.

Dziekuje bardzo. Thank you.